

By **WILLIAM C. KASHATUS**

**T**HE Fort Dix terror plot reinforces the sobering reality that the federal government must rethink its approach to national security. It's only the latest scheme to be foiled on U.S. soil, but there will most certainly be others that may succeed.

The war on terror can't be waged with the same Cold War mentality that dominated U.S. foreign policy from 1945 to 1989. Yet the policymakers in the Pentagon, State Department and Homeland Security continue to operate on those obsolete principles.

The Cold War was an ideological conflict between the United States and the Soviet Union based on opposing systems of government — democracy and communism. Despite the ideological differences, both superpowers understood the importance of diplomacy.

While they threatened each other with nuclear stockpiles, and military and financial aid to nationalist movements in Third World countries, they always returned to the bargaining table.

The realization that nuclear war would destroy the human race led to the Nuclear Test Ban Treaty of 1963, the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks of the 1970s and, ultimately, the end of the Cold War in 1989 via the collapse of the Soviet Union.

The war on terror is different. There is no clearly identifiable geographical enemy or ideology

that unites the various terror groups, the most familiar of which is al Qaeda. The shadowy network is still ostensibly led by Osama bin Laden, who claimed responsibility for Sept. 11.

Other radical Islamic terror groups that originated in Afghanistan, Iran and Iraq have spread, establishing cells in the United States, as evidenced by the Fort Dix plot.

These "jihadists" are intent on driving the United States and its capitalist interests out of the Middle East, and are said to be threat-

ened by the materialist influence on their fundamentalist culture.

Jihadists have no patience for diplomacy. Even if they did, it's doubtful that a constructive settlement can be reached because of the irrationality that pervades the thinking of these groups.

Without diplomacy, how to wage the war on terror becomes the most pressing concern.

"Containment" was the operating principle during the Cold War. The United States believed it could prevent the spread of com-

munist expansion by checking Soviet expansion in Third World countries like Korea, Cuba and Vietnam. U.S. military and financial aid was given to the "freedom fighters" in those countries in the hope of securing our economic, political and national security interests there.

"Pre-emption" is the strategy the Bush administration has used in the war on terror. That is, attack terrorist nations before they attack us. It's not only the most aggressive form of "containment," but also an extremely dangerous way to conduct foreign policy.

Pre-emption assumes that terrorism is monolithic — it isn't — and has proven

disastrous in Iraq. The U.S. commitment of conventional forces might have toppled Saddam Hussein, but our country is now embroiled in a protracted financial and military quagmire that is strikingly familiar to Vietnam.

Many liberal Americans suspect that our presence there is based on the need for oil and are no longer willing to pay the human and financial costs for it.

Pre-emption has also led to the passage of the Patriot Act, which permits extensive tele-

phone and e-mail surveillance and authorized the deportation of suspected terrorists. Such tactics compromise the values of openness and individual freedom that once defined the distinctive character of our democracy.

Sept. 11 marked a watershed in American history, ending centuries of nearly cost-free national security at home. But if our country hopes to prevail in the war on terror, it must take a new approach to national security.

The United States must find alternative energy sources to replace Mideast oil and the American people must be willing to sacrifice the luxury that may require. Individual citizens must also take a more active role in national security by exercising greater vigilance — like the Dix John Doe did — and coordinating efforts through local, state and national agencies.

And the federal government should place a greater emphasis on economic reprisals against any country harboring terrorist groups, the infiltration of suspected organizations, and pursue more innovative intelligence gathering that respects the constitutional rights of its citizens.

Only then will we have less than anything constructive from the current imbroglio in Iraq and the war on terror. ★

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# War on terror needs new approach

